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WHAT'S NEW IN THE POULTRY INDUSTRY

A transcribed talk by Ernie Moore, Coordinator of Research Publication, Agricultural Research Administration, U. S. Department of Agriculture. Recorded October 11, 1945. Time, without announcer's parts, five minutes and 43 seconds.

ERNIE MOORE: (TRANSCRIPTION)

Today I'm going to point out a few things in the poultry business that may be new to some of you folks -- and a few things that are not so new but have a modern slant.

A lot of folks are interested in poultry these days. Especially sailors. For some reason or other, chicken farming seems to have a very strong appeal for the men of Uncle Sam's Navy! (Also, I might add, for the men of the Army and Marine Corps.)

Almost any hour of the day that you go in to the main lobby of the Department of Agriculture -- you'll see a returned service man poring over a list of Department publications. And when he leaves, he's sure to have at least a couple of bulletins on how to raise chickens.

Some of the men don't wait till they get out of the service. They write for what they want. Like the young sailor we heard from not long ago. He wanted all the information on poultry -- including breeding...disease control...housing ...and marketing. He was 19 years old, he said, he'd been in the Navy 27 months, and in the Pacific for nearly a year and a half.

But let me read part of his letter, addressed to the Department:

"I intend to be the best poultry man in New York State...Seeing I'm overseas and as we expect to be six months or more yet, I request you to send the material to this vessel by quickest means." (Needless to say, we did send the material promptly.)

And he added this statement: "Many do not take advantage of the Department of Agriculture but are contented with just getting by."

Well I believe this young sailor has the beginning of wisdom as it applies to chicken farming -- and that is, to make use of scientific research. For science has been checking up on some of the folklore. The old system of "hear 'em cackle and hunt 'em" has given way to trap-nesting, and other methods of building chicks into super-broilers and super-layers.

And speaking of layers -- in 1918, the average egg production for the whole country, per hen per year, was around 113 eggs. By 1944 it was 147, and for 1945, over 150. Of course the hens in the best flocks average well over 200 eggs a year.

There are three main reasons for this remarkable increase in egg production. First, the great improvement in the type of laying hen. The modern farmer doesn't select his breeding stock on looks alone. That's too uncertain and takes

too long. He finds it's much better to practice what is known as "genetic selection." That is, to build up a flock of good layers by choosing the right parent stock. Or if he buys baby chicks -- as most people do these days -- he makes sure they have good breeding back of them.

A second reason for improved egg production is better feeding. Chickens, like people, do better when their diet includes certain amounts of minerals and vitamins, as well as protein. The poultry specialists have found that chickens make their greatest gains -- in proportion to the amount of feed they eat -- when their diet is about 21 percent protein. Incidentally, one of the newer protein feeds used in great quantities during the war is soybean meal.

Here's another point that ties in with nutrition. As every poultry farmer knows, when large numbers of chicks are kept together they may develop bad habits. Such as feather picking, toe picking, and cannibalism. But give them a little more salt for a few days -- say 2 percent of salt in an all-mash diet -- and they'll stop those bad habits.

A third reason for our greatly increased egg production is the fact that more chicks are being produced by commercial hatcheries, where supply flocks are headed by Victory cockerels. They increase egg production of the average flock nearly 10 percent.

Victory cockerels are a product of the National Poultry Improvement Plan. It was started in 1935, and it's supervised by the Bureau of Animal Industry. The purpose of the Plan is to improve production and breeding qualities of chickens, and to cut down losses from pullorum disease. Forty-seven States are now taking part in this Plan. Montana and California have just recently joined up.

Well, briefly, those are some of the main reasons for the high egg production of the past few years, and now let's turn to another line of research -- one that's of special interest to people who are planning to raise chickens for broilers and fryers.

What's the best way to select your breeding stock? According to the experts, you ought to have three things in mind: Fast feathering, rapid growth, and superior conformation.

Fast feathering is a desirable trait, because it reduces the number of pinfeathers a broiler will have when dressed for market. Too many pinfeathers may cut down the price of your broilers two to four cents a pound.

To check on this, examine day-old chicks. The best chicks for broiler stock have well-developed primary feathers -- those are the big flying feathers, on the outer wing -- and they have at least six secondary feathers.

Another point to check on is weight. In selecting birds to be used as breeding stock for broilers, weigh them when they're six weeks old, and keep those that have made the best gains. Then weigh them again at 20 weeks, and remove any birds that have not come up to expectations.

Since the most valuable part of a broiler is the breast meat, check on that, too, when the birds are six weeks old. Only birds with plenty of meat on the breast should be kept in the breeding flocks, when you're raising birds for meat.

If you want more information on this subject, the Department has an illustrated leaflet, Number 233, called "Selecting Breeding Stock for Broiler Production."

Well I've mentioned only a few highlights of poultry research today, but maybe they'll remind newcomers to the business -- including returning soldiers and sailors -- that science is a good anchor to tie to, when it comes to raising chickens.

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ANNOUNCER'S OPENING AND CLOSING

OPENING

ANNOUNCER: (LIVE)

And now by transcription...from the United States Department of Agriculture...we learn how science helps the poultry farmer. If you're interested in raising chicks for broilers -- or building up a flock of good laying hens -- you'll want to hear this report from Ernie Moore, of the United States Department of Agriculture.

CLOSING

ANNOUNCER: (LIVE)

Thanks, Ernie Moore, for bringing us up to date on what science is doing for the chicken farmer.

Friends, you've just heard Ernie Moore, of the Research Administration of the United States Department of Agriculture. If you're interested in that leaflet he mentioned, Leaflet Number 233, the title is "Selecting Breeding Stock for Broiler Production."

To get a copy, send your name and address to the United States Department of Agriculture, Washington 25, D. C. The leaflet is free.

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